



Sacred Heart
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University Review

Volume 14

Issue 1 *Toni Morrison Symposium & Pope John Paul II*
Encyclical Veritatis Splendor Symposium

Article 2

February 2010

Ethics, Education, and Civic Life

Jean Bethke Elshtain

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shureview>

Recommended Citation

Bethke Elshtain, Jean (2010) "Ethics, Education, and Civic Life," *Sacred Heart University Review*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/shureview/vol14/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the SHU Press Publications at DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sacred Heart University Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact ferribyp@sacredheart.edu.

Ethics, Education, and Civic Life

Cover Page Footnote

Jean Bethke Elshtain is Centennial Professor of Political Science and Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. This talk was delivered at Sacred Heart University at the first Hersher Institute for Applied Ethics colloquium on February 24, 1994.

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

Ethics, Education, and Civic Life

For my sins, I am a political philosopher. It is my calling to theorize politics and to politicize theories; to "think what we are doing," in the words of the great Hannah Arendt. The subject at hand is vast and important, touching on nothing less than the ongoing possibility of democratic life and learning.

In his best known if not his greatest song, John Lennon, *my* favorite Beatle, sang, "You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one." He went on to hope – and it was an unabashedly utopian hope, one I do not share – that the world would one day "be as one." That day, I fear, will never come, not in this temporal realm that is history after the fall. My own dream, by contrast to Mr. Lennon's, is more modest – no doubt my mother's "commonsensical" if not somewhat acerbic approach to life figures in this attitude. I was, and I remain, quite unabashedly, a dreamer of democracy, not of harmony, not of unity. This democratic dream is idealistic but not sentimental; it demands a spirit that looks to a future in which each one of us dreams individual dreams, but the greatest dream of all remains the dream of democracy.

That is a dream, in part, of a peaceable kingdom – not a people at one in which differences have been quashed in the interest of a united civic will or ordered harmony – but a civic world within which citizens argue, debate, and vie with and against one another over things that matter politically – liberty, equality, justice, mercy, fairness, order, authority, legitimacy, power. Freedom requires responsibility in this dream. It is a vision for the stout-hearted not the sentimentalist.

My democratic dream was nurtured in a family in which free responsibility was anticipated, even, I dare say, demanded. Failure

Jean Bethke Elshtain is Centennial Professor of Political Science and Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. This talk was delivered at Sacred Heart University at the first Hersher Institute for Applied Ethics colloquium on February 24, 1994.

to live up to one's responsibilities was looked on with a certain severity. I can still hear my mother say, "I don't want excuses." We learned

very early on to distinguish reasons from excuses. Self-reliance was an important value and I cherish those lessons. They helped me to survive a childhood bout with polio from which, according to all the doctors, I was not expected to rebound. I would spend my life in a wheelchair, I was told. My parents didn't believe this and neither did I. That is a long story, one I cannot tell here tonight, but that experience taught me a lot – including some harsh lessons for a 10-year-old child to learn: about how those who are handicapped, are different in particular ways, get treated. More often pitied than anything else. Perhaps that is why I despise paternalism or, for that matter, maternalism in any form to this day, even, or especially, when it comes in the guise of "sensitivity."

My democratic dream was nurtured by our great public documents. All we children in the Timnath, Colorado, population 185, Consolidated School, had to memorize the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address. The Gettysburg Address recitation on Lincoln's Birthday, when we reached grades 7-8, was always quite an event. The combined seventh and eighth grades, under the firm if somewhat eccentric tutelage of Miss McCarthy, would line up in a single row around the classroom we shared, and, on Miss McCarthy's signal, we would begin to hum "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" as she recited The Gettysburg Address with flourish and fervor. It was no doubt a pretty funny sight, given Miss McCarthy's elaborate stogy manner as she intoned "Four score and seven years ago . . ." with the final words in each sentence trailing off in a melodramatic whisper, leaving we hummers in stitches. But I never forgot the Gettysburg Address and its promise of democratic equality.

My democratic dream was nurtured by a presumption that none of us was stuck inside our own skins; that our identities and our ideas were not reducible to our terms of membership in a race, an ethnic group, or a sex. (Nobody used the word gender then – there was the male and female sex.) I remember my father telling me that the "Mexican kids" – Mexican being the term of respect in that time and place – were sometimes smart and nice and sometimes not, just like other kids. It would never have occurred to me that I should "think girlishly," or that my friend, Raymond Baros, was required to "think with his blood" or through his skin.

By the time we reached high school, out there in the Western

Provinces, our text for English class was *Adventures in Reading*, published by Harcourt, Brace. I still have my copy, "Property of the Timnath Consolidated School, District 62, Larimer County, Colorado," with my handwritten note, "Purchased from School. Jean," lest anyone think I had stolen it. The Table of Contents was divided into "Good Stories Old and New," with such bracing sub-sections as "Winning Against Odds," "Growing Up," "Meeting the Unusual," "Facing Problems," "Enjoying Humor." We did "Stories in Verse," the edifying "Footprints on the Sands of Time," "Lyrics from Many Lands," "The Curtain Rises," this, of course, on drama, "The Spirit of Adventure," and "American Songs and Sketches." Was this a text dominated by a single point of view, that of the mythical, abstract villain the Dead White European Male? Absolutely not. We read Mary O'Hara, Dorothy Canfield, Margaret Weymouth Jackson, Elsie Singmaster, Selma Lagerlof, Rosemary Vincent Benet, Sally Knapp, Kathryn Forbes, Christina Rossetti, Irene McLeod, Sarojini Naidu (Ghandi's right-hand woman), Willa Cather, Zulma Steele, Osa Johnson, Emily Dickinson, Jessamyn West, on and on. We read Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. We read Pedro Alarcon and Tolstoy. We read translations of Native American Warrior Songs.

This reading wasn't done under specific rubric of multi-culturalism. But it was undertaken in the assumption that life is diverse, filled with many wonders. Through *Adventures in Reading* we could make the lives and thoughts of others somehow, in some way, our own. Many years later I was flabbergasted to be told my world had surely been impoverished because I had no "role models." Lincoln was one. Ghandi was another. Willa Cather, after I read *My Antonia*, another. I dreamt dreams of Joan of Arc. And, as far as that goes, my grandmother was a pretty tough act to follow. In my imaginings and yearnings, I didn't feel constrained because some of those with whom I identified were men. I later chafed against the constraints that lay outside my imagination, of course, but education is about opening the world up, not putting each of us into a cage which confines our ideas and our ideals and reduces them to the precise terms of race or gender or ethnicity. That is an anti-democratic dream and it is unworthy of free citizens.

I was taught, "Reading is your Passport to adventure in far-away

places. In books the world lies before you, its paths radiating from great cities to distant lands, to scenes forever new, forever changing. . . . Reading knows no barrier, neither time nor space nor bounds of prejudice – it admits us all to the community of human experience." One of the things I learned in that provincial little outpost, the Timnath Consolidated School District No. 62, was that I could send my mind wandering around the globe. Mrs. Griffith, Miss Thayer, Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Curtis, Miss McCarthy – my five and only teachers grades 1-8 – gave me their blessing. Bless them. Clearly, I was a lucky child. I learned that "Learning is not merely acquiring information . . . , nor is it merely 'improving one's mind'; it is learning to recognize some specific invitations to encounter particular adventures in human self-understanding" (Michael Oakeshott, *The Voice of Liberal Learning*).

Is this story merely nostalgia for a more innocent time, now past, or are there lessons to be gleaned from we Americans in the 1950s, now your mothers and fathers and teachers, who learned these civic lessons? My answer is shaped by a conviction that we must not, arrogantly, presume we are all so much smarter than our mothers and fathers or foremothers and forefathers, in my case, my immigrant grandparents on my mother's side of the family who really never learned much about reading and writing the English language, but knew very well indeed the meaning of the word "Freiheit" – freedom. It had sent them off into a terrifying world, a diaspora with destination uncertain, save for one word, "America."

It is because they were brave and bold that I stand before you today. I stand before you as an "encumbered" being, to use a term I owe to Michael Sandel. I am marked by history – by family stories, by my own particular story, by the wider story of my society, and by the extraordinary events in the wider world in which our own society is nested. This is true whether one's ancestors came here seeking freedom or, horribly, came in chains. But freedom is the shared dream. As Orlando Patterson has argued, America is profoundly constituted in and through a founding struggle with freedom as the very ground of this agon.

What story do we tell? What story will my children tell – or your children or the children of your friends and neighbors and fellow-citizens? Nothing less is at stake in current debates over ethics,

education, and civic life. There are two stories that offer us false and dangerous pictures and dreams, the first drawn from a historical era, now past; the second from the present moment. I will rehearse these two tales that pose or posed particular threats to the generous dream of democracy. Education lies at the heart of each of these stories. I will conclude by offering some thoughts on teaching that seem to me consonant with the democratic dream of dialogue and debate.

My first cautionary tale is the story of a quest for unity and homogeneity that assaulted diversity in the process. When American entered the twentieth century, she was a society driven by dreams and fears of rapid industrialization and commercial expansion, dreams and fears of empire, dreams and fears of perfect freedom, dreams and fears of community. In the World War I era the siren allure of an overarching, collective civic purpose took a statist turn that seemed a cure for what ailed the republic, at least on the view of those who lamented our excessive diversity. Nationalizing progressives, disheartened at the messy sprawl that was American life, and desirous of finding some way to forge a unified national will and civic philosophy, saw the coming of World War I as a way to attain at long last a homogeneous, ordered, and rational society.

“To be great,” wrote John R. Commons, a progressive labor economist, “a nation . . . must be of one mind.” Walter Lippmann assaulted the “evils of localism” and fretted that American diversity was too great and had become a block in the way of order, purpose, and discipline. World War I was to be the great engine of social progress, with conscription an “effective homogenizing agent in what many regarded as a dangerously diverse society. Shared military service, one advocate colorfully argued, was the only way to ‘yank the hyphen’ out of Italian-Americans or Polish-Americans or other such imperfectly assimilated immigrants.” President Wilson, who had already proclaimed that any “man who carries a hyphen about him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic,” and who championed universal service as a way to mold a new nation, now thundered in words of dangerously unifying excess:

There are citizens of the United States, I blush to admit, born
under other flags but welcomed under our generous
naturalization laws to the full freedom and

opportunity of America, who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life. . . . Such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy must be crushed out . . . The hand of our power should close over them at once.

Armed civic virtue — my word for the false and dangerous unity of war-time as a model for democratic purpose — had found a home on the shores of the new land.

American education, from the elementary through the college level, was enlisted in this effort. For the first time a national curriculum was endorsed, an approved course of study that allowed for no ambiguities. For example, The National Board for Historical Service rejected one commissioned syllabus — it was collecting syllabi for history courses — because this particular syllabus raised doubts about the “positive values of nationalism.” The instructor’s mistake was to stress reconciling nationalism with internationalism. According to the review board, an untrained teacher might be deflected by this syllabus from portraying the war as a conflict between autocracy and liberal democracy, pure and simple. America’s institutions of higher learning went for the war with relish, using the universities to contribute to the war cause as an embellishment of the “service ideal” that had been part and parcel of the emergence of the modern university in America during the Progressive era. The dream of unity — not, I submit, a democratic dream — had become national. “Americanization” became the goal, the watchword.

Now there were some dissenting voices. One was that of Randolph Bourne. Bourne championed the “trans-national” state. He yearned for a politics of commonalities that cherished and celebrated the bracing tonic that perspicuous contrasts offer to the forging of individualities and communities. He called for an experimental ideal where each of us is free to explore in a world of others; where we can act in common together and act singly. Such an ideal is necessarily hostile to any overly robust proclamation of civic virtue that demands a single, overarching collective unity to attain or to sustain its purposes. But it also stands in opposition to proclamations in the name of diversity that codify and rigidify difference, that reduce us to ethnic, racial, gendered, and tribal categories. This, too, is a

perversion of the dream of democracy and the ideal of education constitutive of it. Bourne celebrated a "cosmopolitan enterprise," a world within which many voices were heard. "America," he wrote, "is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving, or to dye the fabric any one color, or disentangle the threads of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision." The harsh lessons of World War I taught us about the dangers of false unity, that vivid luster of war-time unanimity about which De Tocqueville had warned. But Bourne's vision is of many threads woven to form unexpected patterns; not of a quilt with solid patches representing this color, this gender, this or that identity, kept separate and threatening at any moment to detach itself from the quilt itself. Thus his vision also serves as a critique of the rigidifying of difference now underway in many places in American life and education.

"Perhaps," writes Professor Oakeshott, "we may think of the components of a culture as voices, each the expression of a distinct and conditional understanding of the world and a distinct idiom of human self-understanding, and of the culture itself as these voices joined, as such voices could only be joined, in a conversation — an endless unrehearsed intellectual adventure in which, in imagination, we enter into a variety of modes of understanding the world and ourselves and are not disconcerted by the differences or dismayed by the inconclusiveness of it all. And perhaps we may recognize liberal learning as, above all else, an education in imagination, an initiation into the art of this conversation in which we learn to recognize the voices; to distinguish their different modes of utterance, to acquire the intellectual and moral habits appropriate to this conversational relationship and thus to make our *debut dans la vie humaine*."

What, concretely, does this mean for education and the educator? What vision of teaching and learning is appropriate to the democratic dream? I have in mind a dialogic ideal. I would call it "teaching as drama," save for the fact that I checked out drama in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and found the following:

A composition adapted to be acted in prose; a story related by means of dialogue and action represented with

gesture, costume, scenery; or actions involving a course of events having dramatic unity and leading to a final catastrophe.

A final catastrophe was not where I hoped to wind up; rather, I had in mind a complex story related through dialogue, for what I am trying to capture is a sensibility, a classroom animated by an ethic of respect for the views of others, for the possibility of keeping multiple perspectives in play and in mind and, at the same time, focusing those perspectives, drawing out themes and imperatives, refusing to bring an artificial unity to the whole, yet seeking commonalities — that seems to be a specific challenge of the humanities and social sciences at the college level. Many others can speak to what education for democratic life might or might not have to do with the teaching of mathematics or physics. And it is simply absurd to insist that the elementary school teacher offer twelve different perspectives on this theme or that to children having difficulty, more and more all the time if reports from the frontlines are accurate, just getting the fundamentals of reading and mathematics.

We are, then, dealing with diversity and democracy in the American liberal arts classroom. The classroom I want to give you a sense of is neither a vision of "let it all hang out," on the one hand, nor a passive, orderly reception of an authoritative position beyond challenge, on the other. I have no patience whatsoever with capitulation to the cult of personal experience which was much in vogue in certain circles in the 1970s. One's life enters the classroom, to be sure, but formed and shaped in a way that is fit for public presentation. The classroom is an arena within which the teacher engages those before her in recognition that what is being imparted is not simply that which I have come to know but how I have come to know it and the difference this knowing makes.

Education is captured by that classic notion, "Bildung," a coming into being, an education of the moral sensibilities, the creation of a self. Bear in mind that the world of political thought I inhabit was shaped very early on by the dialogue form. As one recent commentator put it, "Dialogue was and remains the vehicle best designed to dramatize the movement of inquiry as an act of life, involving characters and conversation not intellects in isolation." As a student and teacher of political thought, the classroom is, for me, an arena within which

interlocutors engage one another from a stance of mutual respect. This atmosphere, if you will, can only be set by the teacher's sure and certain conviction of her own authority, for she must proffer the underlying theme and set the tone which pervades the whole.

This, then, is a democratic drama, not as narrow interest group politics, but as respect for the process of dialogue and debate; respect for the need, not only in intellectual life but in political life on certain issues, at certain times, both to disagree and to compromise in the recognition that neither in this classroom, nor in that civic world, is there a moral consensus on a variety of highly charged issues. One cannot always get what one wants. It is not the job of the teacher to proselytize and to make all sorts of grandiose and false claims, including the hubristic claim that the world can be brought to heel if we just find the right method, or that we can predict or control events when we have no such control and can honestly offer no such predictability.

When I was in Prague, Czechoslovakia, I was told by many of those I met that the democratic ideal was a very difficult one for people who had lived over forty-five years in the world of authoritarian politics. It was difficult to move into a way of thinking that was not totalistic. One former dissident, now a member of parliament, told me, "You know," he said, "democracy is a very tricky ideal because it embeds in its heart the ideal of compromise," which is to say a limit on control. We live in a world in which there are other voices. We live in a world in which we either respect the limits set by the existence of others with whom we must engage, or we construct for ourselves a politics, a method of teaching, a perspective that wishes them away, bowls them over, demonizes them, or silences them so that an engagement is no longer necessary. In a democratic society, a teacher of political thought has a responsibility to exemplify democracy, not as watery tolerance, not as a shrinking back from offering up hard truths and sharp claims, but as a way of proffering hard truths and sharp claims that does not demolish those with whom one disagrees.

What sort of drama is this? A drama attuned to the obligation the teacher has to both the living and the dead. The living are those before one in the classroom, those who, for a short four years, are blessed to have given to them a precious space within which their primary task is engaged thinking, is the cultivation of character. It is an extraordinary

gift. What about an obligation to the dead? There's a lot of careless talk these days about our forebears, often cast as dead white European males. One really can't help being either dead, or white, or European, or male, so I'm not quite sure what sort of critique this is. But I am sure that wholesale assaults on the past enjoin and legitimate a vulgar willfulness of the present moment. That is not what the dream of democracy is all about. Rather, it is about permanent contestation between conservation and change, between tradition and transformation. To jettison one side is to live either in a sterile present-mindedness or an equally sterile reaction.

Let me offer up as an example of what I have in mind some words from Willa Cather's novel, *A Lost Lady*. Her protagonist, Neil Herbert, discovers the classics and the classics provide him a way into a new world and a way out of the town of Sweetwater, Nebraska. Cather describes Neil Herbert's discovery of the past:

There were philosophical works in the collection but he did no more than open and glance at them. He had no curiosity about what men had thought, but about that they had felt and lived he had a great deal. If anyone had told him these were classics and represented the wisdom of the ages, he would doubtless have let them alone. He did not think of these books as something invented to beguile the idle hour, but as living creatures caught in the very behavior of living, surprised behind their misleading severity of form and phrase. He was eavesdropping upon the past, being let into the great world that had plunged and littered and sumptuously sinned long before little western towns were dreamed of. Those rapt evenings beside the lamp gave him a long perspective, including his conception of the people about him, made him know just what he wished his own relations with these people to be.

In novels Herbert finds a living, breathing, socially embodied tradition. This is the excitement I hope to convey about the tradition of political thought. The dead not only come to life in and through these texts,

they help forge the conception of the people about us.

We are invited into the drama and the dislocation. Tradition comes from "traditio," to be led out. We are always already part of a tradition or part of the fragments of many traditions. A tradition can lead us out of ourselves, out of previously unthought perspectives into worlds at once more self-aware and less predictable. To think a tradition is to bring matters to the surface, to engage with interlocutors long dead, protagonists who never lived save on the page, and through that engagement to elaborate alternative conceptions through which to apprehend one's world and the way that world represents itself. I take these to be essential to a university, to this university, as well as to democratic civic life.

Students come to a university and rightly ask, "What sort of new world is this?" Ideally, it is a world rather like the one Cather's protagonist finds in a long tradition of great books: how people unlike ourselves, from different times and places, lived and felt — especially those most central in defining our own tradition. It is a place in which students are invited to eavesdrop on the past and to become attuned in critical, interpretive ways to the present.

I hope I have conveyed to you my insistency that we must open up our conceptual and ethical perspectives to those previously un- or underrepresented. But this should not yield diversity of the sort in which hostile groups, defined exclusively by their racial, sexual, or religious identities, refuse to enter into meaningful dialogue with others and are legitimated in that refusal, even, at times, encouraged to it, by faculty. Genuine diversity does not consist in a dozen groups issuing a dozen manifestos, but in men and women debating, discussing, and revealing themselves through speech in a manner respectful of the identities of others.

Confronting diversity — the one and the many — is one of the great dramas of political thought. It is an issue that has vexed political thought from its inception. That helps to account for the dialogue form with which political thought in the West was first given shape and life. It also accounts for why at least part of the drama of the American founding was the Founders' awareness of the vexations attendant upon the creation of a new political body. Was it possible to create a "we" that enabled those thus united to recognize one another in and through their differences as well as in what they shared in common?

That was the great challenge. That remains the great challenge for contemporary American society, as well as the contemporary American university. We require others to help us to define ourselves. We require an arena within which to explore, in a disciplined atmosphere, our own convictions and enthusiasms, lifting up intimations of a communicative vision of community in which individualities are cherished and commonality is a precious if fragile achievement.

Let me offer, finally, a sense of how a crafted drama can be used to convey complex political and civic ideas for our time. My examples are from Albert Camus' plays, *Caligula* and *The Just Assassins*, and there are a couple of moments I want to draw to your attention in order to demonstrate, as the Gospels so powerfully demonstrate with parable, the ways in which ideas made concrete, embodied in the words of protagonists in an unfolding morality play, help us to see, perhaps even to secure, important ethical and philosophical points.

In Camus' *Caligula*, a play based upon the story of the Roman Emperor drawn from a reading of Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*, we find Camus facing the aftermath of World War II – fascism, the growth of Stalinism. He poses questions about collaboration and vengeance in the wake of collaboration, creating a drama in which the problem revealed is that of a relentless idealism which knows no limits. Thus we find one Roman patrician, when he is asked to join a conspiracy against Caligula, saying,

If I join forces with you it's to combat a big idea. An ideal, if you like, whose triumph would mean the end of everything. I cannot endure Caligula's carrying out his theories to the end. He is converting his philosophy into corpses and, unfortunately for us, it's a philosophy that's logical from start to finish.

Caligula is a dangerous man, a tyrant, because he insists on carrying out a theory to the end, because he insists that there should be one voice, one perspective only that is triumphant – his own, that of his philosophy. The play emerges as a cautionary tale of a politics without limits. The tyrant is a man who sacrifices a whole nation to his ideal and his ambition. I daresay, there are in our ranks teachers

prepared to sacrifice a classroom to similar ambition – the ambition to push a single perspective with no limits and from no appropriate sense of humility. You will recall that I mentioned “the other before me” as an independent agent, as a necessary limit on my ability to control and to shape the world through my words and my perspective alone. It is always striking for American students, for whom the word freedom prompts a rousing three cheers in unison, to think about the possibility that freedom without limits is terror.

My second example is from Camus' play *The Just Assassins*, in which a band of Russian anarchists, terrorists if you will, plot to assassinate a grand duke, someone who is a member, in our current lingo, of the “ruling establishment.” They will throw a bomb into his carriage as it moves past in a processional, but it turns out one of the conspirators, at the last moment, cannot do this because he sees that the grand duke's children are in the carriage with him:

How sad they looked dressed up in their best clothes with their hands resting on their thighs like two little statues framed in the windows on each side of the door. My arms went limp. My legs seemed to be giving way beneath me and a moment afterward it was too late.

This is the conspirator, Kaliyev, speaking.

In the aftermath of this failed assassination attempt, the band meets – Stepan, Kaliyev, Dora, among others – and Stepan is outraged that Kaliyev could not carry out the deed. This prompts Dora to initiate the following dialogue, a drama within the drama.

Dora: You, Stepan, could you fire point blank on a child with your eyes open?

Stepan: I could if the group ordered it.

Dora: Why did you shut your eyes then?

Stepan: What? Did I shut my eyes?

Dora: Yes.

[When he's describing how he could have done it, his eyes closed.]

Stepan: Then it must have been because I wanted to picture .

ETHICS, EDUCATION, AND CIVIC LIFE

31

. . what you describe, more vividly, and to make sure my answer was the true one.

Dora: Open your eyes, Stepan, and try to realize that the group would lose all its driving force, were it to tolerate, even for a moment, the idea of children's being blown to pieces by our bombs.

Stepan: Sorry, but I don't suffer from a tender heart; that sort of nonsense cuts no ice with me. . . . Not until the day comes when we stop sentimentalizing about children will the revolution triumph, and we will be masters of the world.

Dora: When that day comes, the revolution will be loathed by the whole human race.

The drama of teaching — for democracy, in recognition of genuine diversity which is respect for the dignity of the human person *qua* person not as a member of a gender or race or ethnicity — is a series of crafted and shaped interventions that tap, at one and the same time, that which we are coming to know and that which we are learning to be.

I feel somewhat bereft as I come to a close for I recognize, all too well, that I am swimming against the tide. There is so much anger and resentment and demeaning paternalism parading around as sensitivity. Under cover of celebrations of diversity all too often percolates an ideology which dictates that the entire world, including the university, is divided simply into rulers and victims and what everything finally comes down to is power. This is the authoritarian world of Thomas Hobbes, not the democratic world of Jane Addams or Martin Luther King. For it was Hobbes who proclaimed that all human beings were dominated by a "restless seeking after power that ceaseth only in death." Yet it is under this rubric that so much about university life has been politicized. As President Schmidt of Yale recently claimed, "Full human beings do not live by politics alone." Nor should educational institutions recast their missions as explicitly political or therapeutic ones, especially when the upshot is the promotion of a homogeneity of group identity.

Have we become so cynical that we no longer believe in anything at all except self or group interest? I hope not. I pray not. I return to Mr. Lincoln and four short sentences to his fellow Americans, these from the first Inaugural. No doubt they sound so quaint to us and yet, on some deep level, his words break our hearts. For we democratic citizens rightly long to believe again in the promise that the body is one but has many members so that we might once again share Lincoln's words and in this education has a particular ethical responsibility, both for what we have and for what we might reclaim: "I am loathe to close. We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living hearth and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet see the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."